

The Catholic College and the Catholic Mind

REV. JOHN K. RYAN, PH.D.

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NOT infrequently it is remarked—"charged" would perhaps be the better word—that graduates of Catholic colleges are often unable to meet hostile criticisms of their religious beliefs and practices or are insufficiently prepared to explain them to others. A young man, say, has received his education in parochial schools, in a Catholic high school or academy, and finally in a Catholic college. Intellectually, such a one should be equipped to defend the faith, to answer objections and to maintain his position in the face of open criticism. More than that, he should have the will, energy and ability to spread his faith as well as to defend it, to be aggressive in the midst of indifference as well as defensive before attacks.

Such determination and ability, it has been more than once remarked, are precisely what too many Catholic college men lack. They are held to be unable to meet the modern world, its ways of action, thought and utterance, and to give full and correct expression of their own faith and thought. The conclusion, made explicit or left to be drawn, is that there is something wrong with Catholic education, and especially with Catholic college education. Somewhere, perhaps throughout the entire system, there may be a great vitiating flaw that is responsible for this impotence of intellect and will in a situation where their powers are most needed.

Like most objections to things human, this criticism is in part only too true. Yet for all its partial truth it is essentially unconsidered and unwarranted because it does not take account of all the facts that conspire to produce a unique and intricate situation. The criticism exemplifies the common human fallacy of attempting to assign a single immediate and sufficient cause to a given effect, whereas

reality, especially where human beings are concerned, is too rich and varied to be subject to any such simplification.

A graduate of a Catholic college, just emerged from youth into manhood, is suddenly transported into an almost completely different world. He is unable to give full and final answer to all the objections that may be proposed by skeptical pagans and Jews, or, perhaps as often, by skeptical Protestants and Catholics. It is regrettable that he cannot always give instant and invincible answers to all the thousand and one difficulties that he may meet. Yet when he is unable to do so, is it so simple a matter as the direct and culpable result of a single cause? Is it a matter of personal failure, responsibility and blame at all? May it not be a sign of something that goes beyond mere methods of instruction and study and rests in the heart of the Catholic religion and at the base of Catholic life itself?

Consider. In our time, the educated Catholic, if he is really "to know his religion," as the consecrated phrase puts it, and thus to be ready to meet all the countless objections that may be put to him, must be more literal and ambitious than Bacon himself in taking all knowledge as his province. He must know dogmatic theology with all its various divisions and tracts. He must know moral theology, and not it alone but something also of the principles and practices of casuistry. He must be a philosopher, able to give an exposition and defense of his solutions of the perennial problems of metaphysics, cosmology, theodicy, epistemology and ethics. His philosophic tenets are those of Plato and Aristotle, of St. Augustine and St. Thomas. They are the teachings, in other words, of the greatest of philosophers, and merely for that reason, if for no other, they are not the easiest doctrines to grasp and communicate to others.

To a knowledge of his own system he must add a knowledge of other systems as well, if he is to meet objections drawn from them. Thus for the modern educated Catholic it is not enough to know the traditional ethic and moral and ascetic theology of sex; he must also be acquainted with the teachings, for instance, of Sigmund Freud, Havelock Ellis and Bertrand Russell. Liturgy, canon law, something at least of mystical theology—these, too, have their claims on his knowledge. History, science, economic doctrines, political and sociological theories—all these must of right be

studied by the modern Catholic, for they all have their direct and immediate references to his religious faith. It is significant that Bacon at the end of the sixteenth century spoke of taking all knowledge as his "province." His fields were nothing if not provincial in comparison with the imperial, the cosmic, reaches that the modern educated Catholic is expected to explore and conquer.

The reasons in history for this emphasis upon the apologetic, with its accompanying demand that the educated Catholic be above all an apologist, are familiar. For the past four hundred years the Church has been on the defensive. What Ralph Adams Cram has called "the three R's" of the modern world—Renaissance, Reformation and Revolution—launched their several attacks upon almost every Catholic belief, practice and institution. Against such attacks defenses had to be raised so quickly and so constantly that a leading place in the Church's educational program was necessarily given to preparation for defensive warfare. Such warfare was not lessened when the forces of Renaissance, Reformation and Revolution exhausted themselves.

In their stead and partly as their fruition arose modern science, and it was inevitable that conflicts real or apparent, should result between the fixed doctrines of the Church and the constantly changing stream of scientific theories. More than this, the entire spirit and method of modern scientific thought have been essentially critical and analytic and there has been no possibility of escape by the Church's doctrine from the universal processes of criticism and analysis with their attendant occasions for controversy. Finally, in addition to such abstract realities as methods, spirits and doctrines, there have been the countless men and women who have made their *ex professo* personal attacks upon the Church and everything connected with it.

So universal, so varied, so continuous and so penetrating have been these attacks that some of them have even become matters of internal controversy as well as points of argument between Catholic and non-Catholic. Thus, to give an instance that is minor, even trivial, it has been known for Catholics as well as others to find a sinister theological and moral meaning in the fact that certain political machines are largely manned by what are called "practical Catholics."

Is it any wonder that apologetics have been stressed in Catholic education even at the cost of other things that are deeper, more abiding and more important?

The Catholic presents no exception to the rule that in our times an educated man must know everything about something and something about everything. Yet it is certainly not according to the mind and nature of the Church that Catholics of today, "to know their religion," should bear all the burden of knowledge that the modern situation seems to make their duty. It is the need and hope of the Church now as in the past to produce specialists who are able and ready to defend its dogmas and advance its claims in specific fields of thought and action. Now as in the fifth century the Church strives to produce the author of a *Contra Faustum Manichæum* and a *Contra Academicos*. In the twentieth century as in the thirteenth it hopes to produce one who has the ability and will to write a *Summa contra Gentes*. But no more now than in the fifth and thirteenth centuries is it in the Church's hope or to its advantage to give issue to a race or even a class of Augustines or Aquinases. Divinely founded and endowed, it is not the essential teaching function of the Church to transform all, or even any large part, of the human beings confided to its care into a sect of apologetes. Rather is it the Church's high and essential purpose to give to all its subjects a view of life and a way of life. With divine authority it strives to give to the most as well as to the least educated of its members the mind and the will to see life steadily and to see it whole, and this in a deeper and truer sense than any ever dreamed of by Sophocles or Matthew Arnold.

In marked contrast to this essential purpose of the Church to give to all men an inclusive and energizing view and way of life are the almost necessary tendencies of an over-emphasis upon the merely apologetic. These several tendencies are towards the diverse conditions that Father Erich Przywara in a remarkable article once called "defensive," "critical," "compromising" and "adaptive" Catholicisms.¹ In the case of our own efforts for higher education the tendency towards a purely defensive Catholicism is most obvious and of most immediate danger. The dangers of this

¹Rev. Erich Przywara, S.J., *Catholicism Today: the Situation and the Challenge. The Catholic Educational Review*, March, 1931.

purely defensive Catholicism lie in its incomplete character and in its false contention, expressed more vividly by negative facts than by any actual words or deeds, that merely to secure what we possess as individuals and as a group is the fulfilment of Catholic duty in modern times. Its dangers arise, to quote Father Przywara again, from a "‘fear of (secret) unbelief,’ which is only passively defensive because it recoils from the true daring required by belief."

In its extremest form such defensive Catholicism is almost sectarian, an almost open acceptance of an attitude that is both logically and theologically impossible for the genuine Catholic. For it involves the thought that the Church should content itself with being but a part among parts, that it should preserve what it already possesses, but make no serious effort to gain anything more, that it should adapt itself as best it can to new events but not arouse itself to mould and direct them, that it should give over its duty of teaching all nations, including our own, and give up its final goal of universal dominion over the minds and hearts of men.

The dangers arising from this almost sectarian spirit of defensive or, as it may also be called, apologetic Catholicism, are not fanciful. They are real and working and they come from the facts that have already been stated. In its complete form apologetic Catholicism expects the ordinary Catholic to bear an intolerable burden of knowledge and to possess an impossible dialectic skill. Much more does it expect the Catholic college graduate to bear this burden. It expects this because it is at heart content that the universal Church should accept an anomalous and unnatural position in the modern world, and in being so content it effectively presents the Church in a false and incomplete way as merely one institution among many.

Such an interpretation of the Church's character is, of course, no more tenable today than it was in the first or the thirteenth centuries, nor will it find any formal defenders. But it is nevertheless the logical outcome of a mere apologetic Catholicism, and for such Catholicism there is only one answer. That is the answer of an integral Catholicism that brings with it, among other things in both the natural and supernatural orders, a knowledge of the true nature of the Church, an intuition of the profounder meanings of its doc-

trines and the will both to live the Catholic life and to communicate it to others. To transmit this integral Catholicism must be the aim of every Catholic educational agency and especially of those that are called "higher"—the seminary, the university and the college.

In its attempts to produce men and women possessed of and informed by this integral Catholicism, the college cannot be content with mere compromises and makeshifts. Its duty is not fulfilled by a perfunctory and grudging admission of religion as one element in its curriculum and the easy allotment of one or two hours to various religion courses with imposingly technical titles. Nor does the first duty of the Catholic college lie in the negative process of keeping doctrines contrary to Catholic belief and practice from being taught in non-religious courses. Even if religion courses are provided and even if the other courses contain no source of positive danger, the duty of the Catholic college is forgotten and unfulfilled if the college allows itself to become completely secularized in the content of its teaching, in its cultural concerns, in its extra-curricular interests and activities and in its general way of life. There is no possibility of the Catholic college hovering like Mahomet's coffin between heaven and earth, part secular and part Catholic. Trying to be such, it will fail most abjectly in whatever half-measures it takes to realize its own essential character and attain its primary ends.

It is only by an integral and integrating Catholicism in the college itself, in its life and spirit and atmosphere, and in the lives and thoughts and activities of its faculty, that this same integral and integrating Catholicism can be transmitted to the students for whom the college exists. It is within college walls and in college years that the very type and ideal of Catholic life should have their beginning for the educated Catholic.

Since what is indicated here is Catholic life, it cannot be confined to any single part or place of the college, nor does it begin or end there. Yet there is one place in the college where this Catholic life should show itself intellectually with an especial vigor and vividness, and that is in the classes in religion. Often these classes provide illustrations of another variety of the fallacy of over-simplification that has already been mentioned. Fond of talking about the depth and rich-

ness of Catholic truth, we too frequently proceed to express that truth in its lowest and most atomic terms. For such simplifications there are obvious needs and occasions, as in the case of children, but there are greater occasions and needs for fuller and more mature statements of Catholic truth.

As Dean Gauss of Princeton has said, the cry of the modern college man is, "Treat us like men!" and in the religion class as elsewhere on the campus the things of childhood ought to give place to those of a man. It is in the college course in religion, if ever in education and life, that attempts should be made to grasp and express not the bare essentials of Catholic doctrine but rather its deepest and fullest meaning. For Catholic men and women who are nearing the end of their formal education there is need not for the simplicities of the catechetical hornbook and primer of apologetics but for the best and highest and most moving things in the Church's theology and philosophy.

The most direct and in effect the only way in which the college student can learn to know these best and most moving things is by reading them in their most complete and authoritative expressions. John Erskine once remarked that the practice of the entire American college system is based on the theory that the students cannot read; and it may be added that nowhere has this theory been put into more rigorous practice than in our own religion courses. There is more than one graduate of a Catholic college who can look back over his college career and search in vain for a single instance in his classes in religion where books other than the text itself were assigned to be read. As a result there were countless wasted hours and an almost complete lack of stimulation and development in the intellectual appreciation of Catholic truth. It was not that there was a lack of ability or inclination to read the great Catholic authors both ancient and modern. It was simply that through lack of direction, advice and encouragement these writers were names or even less, or at most were known only through a reference or a quotation, a poem or a stray essay.

And the most unforgivable part of the whole bleak situation in years past was that the best students, when left to themselves, turned indiscriminately to men like Wells and Shaw, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche and Anatole France; just as at present the best students, when left undirected and

unadvised, turn indiscriminately to the dissolving pages of Bertrand Russell and Eugene O'Neill, Aldous Huxley and Noel Coward, Havelock Ellis and Sigmund Freud. The waste that springs from the conviction that students cannot read is not only of time but as well of the minds, and ultimately of the efforts and complete loyalty, of those in whom should lie the Church's highest hopes.

"Give them big ideas," according to Father Joseph Rickaby, was the advice offered by an archbishop "to one still young and inexperienced, who was about to enter upon the spiritual charge of Church students."² It is precisely such ideas that Catholic college students as well as seminarians must be given and must acquire for themselves. Big ideas are genuinely Catholic ideas, ideas that are universal and eternal in their meaning. They have been drawn from the depths of divine revelation, from the history of a divine institution in twenty centuries and in every land, and from the reflective experience of sages who were also saints. These are the ideas that have been given expression by fathers of the Church, by medieval philosophers, by men of the Renaissance, of the Grand Century and of these latter centuries as well, for the springs of Catholic thought and utterance have never run dry. And whether these big ideas are found on the pages of Augustine of Hippo or Thomas of Aquin, of Thomas More or Blaise Pascal, of Newman or Karl Adam, they can be grasped by men of today and become principles that will dominate their thinking and give force and direction to their decisions and actions.

To read of the best that has been thought and done and thus to become aware of what the Church is and what it stands for, of what it has done in the past and what it faces today—to read of all this in the words of those who can write of it with the dignity of authority is an indispensable means to the development of the completely Catholic mind. For these Catholic ideas are what their name really means, universal mental forms by which and in which particular things and events can be known and understood.

If it is the goal of the Catholic college "to send forth men and women informed by a Catholic philosophy of life, an intellectualism not rigid, cold and sterile, but completely

²Rev. Joseph Rickaby, *An Old Man's Jottings*, p. 7. - London, 1925.

Catholic and therefore warm, vital and fruitful."³ the college must concern itself most urgently with its more gifted students. It is in them, with their resources of intellect and will, that leaders are to be found and developed. Hence it is by them and by the intellectual and cultural attainments of which they are capable, and not by the mediocre and the inferior students, that standards are to be set. To do otherwise, to be satisfied with simplifications and understatements and the bare minimum suited to the poorest, instead of the maximum and optimum attainable by the best, is to continue that tragic waste of which the past is so guilty.

For now as in the past we have been given students of great talents as well as of great devotion to their religion. Given such students, the Catholic college has the strict duty of fashioning in them Catholic minds that are able to see the world and life and the present thoughts and deeds of men in the white light of eternal truth. For such Catholic minds with their ability to interpret, integrate and synthesize, the apologetic problem is what it should be, something secondary and subsidiary. For them a thousand difficulties do not make a doubt, because they are not mere apologetic Catholics trying to accept and compromise with an alien order. Seeing life *sub specie æternitatis* and conscious of the essential strength and certainty that come from this integrating and searching view of life, they are able to take their place in the modern world and yet rise above it.

Particularly in an age such as this is it imperative that the Catholic college strive to inform its best students with a completely Catholic philosophy of life. Such students so informed will have a better perception of the true nature of the Church and of the true meaning of the present chapter in human history. Being not merely adaptive or apologetic Catholics, they will see that it is the character and office of their faith to dominate and direct rather than to accept and compromise with existing conditions. They will not fail to see that our present era is one of the great critical periods in history, when the race is turning to new directions and towards new objectives. They will see that these new directions are not determined by blind chance or inexorable law, but by human leaders, men and women who have conceived,

³Rev. John K. Ryan, *The Goal of a Catholic College Education. The Catholic Educational Review*, January, 1934.

however obscurely, certain objectives and are working towards them. Finally, they will have the light to see that they themselves have the ability and the duty of leadership, that it is their part and within their power not merely to accept and adapt but rather to change and direct. In the place of the poor and often futile measures of an apologism that savors almost of defeatism, the completely Catholic mind has to offer the hope of constructive and creative efforts in behalf of a distracted and driven humanity.

Not for a moment can one fail to see how difficult to fulfill is the Catholic college's duty of producing educated Catholics who will have the ability and determination to be instruments in the Church's long task of reformation and reconstruction. That is a task for heroes and the Catholic college will have no part in fashioning such men and women if it is willing to minimize and hurry over the tremendous, the glorious, the ancient and ever-new truths of Catholic belief and practice, and give in their place some shabby compromise or shoddy novelty. "Or what man is there among you, of whom if his son shall seek bread, will he reach him a stone? Or if he shall ask him a fish, will he reach him a serpent?"

Intellectually as well as morally and spiritually it is the goal of the Catholic college to produce "the scribe instructed in the kingdom of heaven," one who can live the old faith in a new world, one who will bring forth "out of his treasure new things and old." Today, as never before, is the true scribe needed to take his effective part in our epic time. Only by striving to train him and to endow his mind from the treasurehouse of high Catholic thought can the Catholic college achieve its purpose and realize its essential character.

Seven Tests for Miracles

DR. THOMAS COLVIN, K.S.G.

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SEVEN conditions which should be fulfilled before a cure is recognized as miraculous were suggested by Dr. Thomas Colvin, K.S.G., when he opened a discussion at a meeting of the Catholic Medical Guild in Glasgow.

Dr. Colvin said that he often had cases sent to him by theologians for his opinion of a miraculous cure.

His opinion, based on forty-two years' observations in the diagnosis and treatment of disease in a very large general medical practice, was that if the cure fulfilled the following seven conditions then he would consider it miraculous:

1. The cure must be instantaneous. A disease like tuberculosis might become quiescent under favorable conditions and active again under unfavorable conditions. Hence if the cure were not instantaneous but gradual, then the objection raised would be that it was due to the natural process of repair tissue.

2. The cure must be permanent. The factor of time was recognized in miracles at Lourdes, for the miraculées have to report themselves for at least a year, or often longer, after the alleged miracle.

3. The cure must be of a disease with objective signs as well as the symptoms of the patient. It must be seen, or felt, or heard by auscultation, or revealed by X-rays, or chemical analysis, by the physician or surgeon.

4. It must be a cure that cannot be explained by the natural process of healing inherent in every living tissue.

5. The alleged cure must have been examined immediately before and immediately after the cure has taken place by a physician or surgeon, or credible witness, or witnesses. One of the objections raised against the famous Pierre de Rudder miracle, which was a large gaping wound in the miraculée's leg for eight years (the result of a compound fracture) was that he had not been seen for three months by a doctor prior to the instantaneous closure of his foul wound. As the late Professor Windle, F.R.S., wisely remarked: "Is no one but a tailor capable of deciding whether there is a hole in a pair of trousers or not?"

6. The cure must not be such that it could be paralleled by a similar cure where no question of miracle was raised.

7. In a cure of a nervous disease there must be objective evidence of an organic lesion so as to exclude purely functional diseases, such as "hysteria." It was worthy of note that, as far back as 1747, Pope Benedict XIV, in his directions to "The Beatification of the Servants of God" laid down a rule that cures which were associated with the nervous system were not to be relied on in canonizations.

The Problem of Youth

REV. F. J. LANE

Chaplain, State Reformatory, Elmira, N. Y.

*Address delivered at the Seventy-ninth General Convention,
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THE problem of youth goes back to the beginning of organized society. The classic writers of Rome and Greece give us evidence of their concern for the proper training of the youth of their time. But it is only of recent years that this problem has been brought home to us in a striking way when we were told that almost seventy-five per cent of the violent crimes committed in the United States are perpetrated by the youth of our country.

We who are engaged in the field of criminology try to find the cause why certain individuals depart from the normal standards of life and join that appalling army of youthful delinquents who pass through our courts in the course of a year. After considering nearly ten thousand cases, I dare say that neither psychiatry nor sociology nor any other modern science will ever discover any one particular cause or any specific group of causes. We may catalogue a number of reasons or direct causes, only to find on closer analysis that they are not primarily or directly responsible, so that we frequently say that there are almost as many causes of crime as there are criminals. Since the theme of this convention is the Restoration of the Family, I will try to limit this paper to a consideration of the youthful criminal and his family or home.

The years between fourteen and sixteen are the most dangerous in a boy's life and most boys who go wrong begin to show tendencies toward delinquency during those years. The angels of heaven and the devils of hell wage a fierce battle for the possession of the soul during these all-important years. Never in the history of man has youth been surrounded with so many alluring snares and temptations as are in the world today. The very atmosphere of society seems to imbue them with the idea that they have "Rights." And it is their demand for these rights and liberties that baffle the understanding of most parents; one of the chief

causes of the great gulf that separates parents and children is the steadfast refusal on the part of the parents to modernize their system of child training to meet modern conditions. No wonder then that parents complain that the growing members of the family tell them that they are "old-fashioned."

It is always a mistake to compare the orderly life of the father's boyhood with that of his twentieth-century son. It is incumbent on the parents of today to study the behavior of their son and the conditions in which he lives.

Delinquency today may be compared to human disease; it is as a rule contracted through contamination, but its symptoms are generally manifest before it becomes serious. The sources of infection are the gang on the corner, the automobile, the road house, the public dance hall, and the pool parlors; the symptoms are shown in truancy, idleness, unknown or questionable companions, disobedience, late hours, and carelessness in performing religious duties and obligations. It is hard to believe, yet there are parents so limited in the powers of perception that they cannot see a danger signal in these symptoms which should receive immediate attention before it is too late.

Many a youth has unintentionally gone astray in quest for natural adventure, a desire for entertainment or a good time. Some parents may think they can suppress this natural craving for amusement, and may succeed for a time, only to find out later that this appetite was gratified secretly and without their knowledge. If this desire for entertainment and companionship is not furnished in the home, then it is going to be sought elsewhere, and very often in unfavorable environment as is found at the corner, in the theater, in the pool room or in automobile riding, very often with strangers. After interviewing hundreds of fathers and mothers of delinquent youth, they would admit that they did not know of their son's "hang-out" until notified by the police that their boy was "locked up." This lack of parental control is sometimes due to the fact that parents do not know or do not try to find out where their sons spend their time outside of work; sometimes it is due to indifference and occasionally we have met parents who told us that they thought it was the "spirit of the times" and that their boy was no different than other boys of his age.

If less thought were given to the wear and tear of parlor furniture and to the noise and inconvenience of home parties, and if grouchy fathers would permit the piano, the saxophone or the radio to be used more frequently, fewer boys would be driven out to the degrading influence of the unsupervised public place of amusement. If parents would keep a closer eye on these young people and make it a point to know where and with whom they spend their leisure time, then much of the suffering caused by jail sentence could be avoided.

Can those parents, who give their boys and girls door keys in order that their own sleep may not be disturbed, and who do not know at what time they arrive home, expect to escape entirely from blame when their son's or daughter's mishap occurs? Can we say that they are without guilt who allow their sons and daughters to spend the week-end at summer resorts or at bungalow parties without any adult supervision and under most soul destroying surroundings?

It would seem that eternal vigilance is necessary if children are to be saved from the modern perils which are constantly threatening their precious childhood. The responsibilities of parents have always been grave, but today they are the gravest conceivable and must be shared equally by both parents. Bringing up the children is not a mother's job alone; yet, many fathers seem to think that in providing a home and turning in a portion of the weekly envelopes their responsibility ends there. What a tragic mistake such an attitude is, and how many fathers are really to blame when the crash comes! Children do not live by bread alone, and fathers who fail to give good example and good advice, who do not caution against the pitfalls of life, who are not watchful and companionable, are not living up to the divine precepts of parenthood. On the other hand, mothers must play fair with fathers. It is almost a universal practice in homes of children who misbehave, to have the mother conceal from the father all information regarding the serious delinquencies of the children. This form of household conspiracy, however well intentioned, is detrimental to the welfare of the children and is bound to show its evil results sooner or later.

The man of the house must cultivate a patience to listen, a temperament that will invite rather than repel the confi-

dence, especially of his sons. Those fathers who spend little time with their families, who are not interested in the problems of their children, who have no time to listen to their difficulties, who are satisfied to have them "kicked up," instead of being brought up, cannot be without blame for the runaway boy who, at the first opportunity, prefers the risk of shame and dishonor to remaining at home where he feels he is not appreciated nor understood.

Let fathers and mothers and all others who are entrusted with the care of children bear this truth in mind, that the one powerful element in the salvage of children from the treacherous quicksands of our times is the religious home, wherein the word and love of God are still the guiding spirit. Parents who neglect the religious training of their children do so at their peril. What excuse can parents offer nowadays for sending their children to schools, not only elementary but also those of higher training, where the word of God is never heard, where the whole atmosphere is anything but religious. Statistics covering the past twelve years show that only twenty-nine per cent of the Catholic young men received at the reformatory ever attended a Catholic school, and one-half of their number left before completing the sixth grade. That leaves twelve per cent who completed the eighth grade in a parochial school.

The greatest influence upon a youthful mind is the example of his father and mother. If they do not perform their religious duties, and attend church regularly, they can hardly expect their children to do so. They may be able to force them to go while they are young, but as they grow older they will likely follow in the footsteps of their parents. This is brought out by the fact that only thirty-five per cent of our inmates say that their parents attend church regularly.

In recent years there has been a growing tendency on the part of public agencies toward taking over the duties of parents; this is not to be wondered at when we consider how many parents have failed in their duty and how willingly they have surrendered their responsibilities to others. Today there are parents who invite and expect the State to do everything for the child, while they do nothing. They expect the incorrigible child to be made obedient, the lazy one industrious, the sinful one good, the untidy one clean, the

undernourished one fed, the sickly one well, while they sit idly by as spectators to the process.

How rarely do we find a home today in which a real religious atmosphere prevails; where reverence is found at the table and in the living room; where profanity is never heard; where the parent and child go to Mass, Confession and holy Communion together; where no date is made without permission and full explanation of who and where and why and how late?

Any garden would be full of weeds, if it received as little spiritual and religious care as the average parent bestows upon his children!

Why Lent?

FRANCIS P. LeBUFFE, S.J.

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PENANCE and mortification, self-denial and self-repression have never been much in fashion in this world. Possibly, they are less in fashion today than ever before in the Christian era. For these are the days of "self-expression," of the excommunication of "repression," of the banning of the psychology of "don'ts," and so on. Lent is a direct slap in the face of a "self-expressing" world.

Then, why Lent? More than ever must Catholics have an answer ready. A threefold answer may be given, based on the general laws of rational and Christian mortification, applied to this particular season of the ecclesiastical year.

The first and psychologically fundamental reason for self-denial is the securing of self-control. This is a deliverance of reason itself, based on experience. No one can become master of himself unless he schools himself to say "no" to his desires and inclinations precisely at the times and in the circumstances wherein he might have said "yes." To go in the way of pleasures always to the very threshold of what is unlawful means that under the stress of strong temptation one will easily transgress the limits reason counsels and God enjoins. One needs to store up a reserve energy, upon which one can call when there is need. One must have trained oneself to halt summarily at the word of

command, even when not needed; just as in schools we have fire drills when there is no fire about at all.

Pleasures are right and lawful, for God made this a pleasant world, and He made it a pleasant world *for man*. It is a striking thing to read the first chapter of Genesis in the light of the "pleasantness" of the world. Throughout the days of creation, we read: "And God saw that it was good." And when all things, man himself included, had been created, the story is closed off with the words: "And God saw all the things that He had made and they were very good."

Thus the world as God made it is good. But man has done much to spoil this world and the world which man has made against God's will is bad. God has made the human eye to see the beauties of His creation; man has made the unholy play and motion picture, and has printed the sex-drenched novel. God has given the taste for food and drink; man has exalted gluttony and drunkenness into almost social virtues. God has given the ability to dance; man has invented the lascivious dances. God's good world—man's bad world. God's world we may enjoy lawfully—and yet even there we shall overstep, unless we have learned to deny ourselves at least in little things. Man's sinful world cannot be enjoyed without taint, and yet this world of man's making is a tempting thing and makes strongest appeal at times to that which is lowest within us yet is hardest to control when once aroused. Successful resistance to its appeal can come only from repeated self-denial where wholly lawful things are concerned.

Francis Thompson puts this law succinctly in "Any Saint":

Compost of Heaven and mire,
Slow foot and swift desire!

Lo,

To have Yes, choose No;
Gird, and thou shalt unbind;
Seek not, and thou shalt find;

To eat,
Deny thy meat.

Thus, psychologically, self-denial is the price of self-control. In fact, it is the price of real adulthood. Without self-denial, I shall always do what *I want* to do, and when *I want* to do it—and that is what a child does. With

self-denial, I shall learn to do what I *ought* to do and when I *ought* to do it—and that is to be grown-up.

A second valid reason for self-denial (which then turns it into penance) is reparation for past sins. If I have misused the powers that God has given me, then I should repair that wrongdoing by cheating myself precisely of those things the misuse of which meant sin. If excess in drink has found place in my life, then penance may rightly take the form of denying myself the pleasures of taste. If my eyes have sinned in looking upon wanton things, then those same eyes may properly be denied some thing of beauty they might legitimately enjoy.

That punishment "in kind" is proper psychologically. It is also proper morally. For if I have allowed myself to vindicate a supremacy over my eyes that ran counter to God's supremacy, then it is very right to show unrequired submission by not using them when I might do so lawfully. If I have sought my ease and comfort and thus neglected the duties of my state of life, a bit of self-inflicted discomfiture is quite in order to prove my willingness to retrieve my mistakes.

These two motives are founded quite solidly on reason itself. For them I require no revelation from God, nor do I need to know aught of Christ. But the third reason for self-denial and penance is a purely Christian reason: likeness with Our Lord, and imitation of His life and suffering. It is precisely this reason which is operative in the decision of the Church to have her children abstain from meat on Fridays, and to fast and abstain during Lent. Friday is the weekly reminder of Christ's passion; and so Catholics vitalize that memory by adjusting their lives thereto that day, with a definite form of self-denial—abstinence from flesh meat. Lent is the yearly reminder of Our Lord's own fast of forty days, and particularly of His passion and death for us; and so the Church would have us go decidedly out of our way to bring into our own lives strong pledges of our imitation of our crucified King.

He was poor and deprived of life's luxuries; during Lent we should deprive ourselves voluntarily of at least some of the things that go to make life comfortable. He was hungry at times and had not food to eat; the fast, morning and evening, will make us one with Him in such privation. He

often prayed the night through on the mountain top; a greater amount of prayer will unite our hearts more closely to His. He was scourged, and crowned with thorns, and crucified; a bit of positive pain or discomfiture inflicted willingly on ourselves, will prove us no "delicate soldiers of a thorn-crowned King." Our Lord said Himself: "He that taketh not up his cross and followeth me, is not worthy of me."

There is no morbidity in all this. It all springs from love: the love that wants to make reparation; the love that wants to grow more like the One loved. No one in his right mind takes pleasure in inflicting pain on himself or in denying himself some tidbit or recreation. (That there have been some thus morbidly minded is no least reason for charging the whole system of Christian and rational mortification with abnormality.) Love is really the capacity for sacrifice, and the more one loves, the more is one ready to give up all for the beloved, and the more does one give up in fact.

It is all done out of love; to show our own love, and to beg more manifestation of God's love to us. This is brought out clearly in the liturgy.

At the blessing of the Ashes on Ash Wednesday in the third Collect we read:

O God, who art moved my humiliation, and appeased by satisfaction; incline the ear of Thy clemency to our prayers, and mercifully pour forth upon the heads of Thy servants, sprinkled with these ashes, the grace of Thy blessing; that Thou mayest both fill them with the spirit of compunction, and effectually grant those things which they have justly prayed for; and ordain that what Thou hast granted may be established and remain unmoved for ever.

Throughout the liturgy there is the message of hope. Though, while she marks our heads with ashes, Mother Church reminds us: "Remember, man, that thou art dust, and unto dust thou shalt return," she has first cried out, borrowing the words from the Psalmist: "Have mercy, O Lord, for thy mercy is kind; look upon us, O Lord, according to the multitude of thy tender mercies" (lxviii, 17). While the ashes are being distributed the choir chants:

Let us change our garments for ashes and sackcloth: let us fast and lament before the Lord, for our God is plenteous in mercy to forgive our sins.

Between the porch and the altar, the priests, the Lord's ministers, shall weep, and shall say: Spare, O Lord, spare Thy people: and shut not the mouths of them that sing to Thee, O Lord.

We have sinned—yes. And we deserve punishment—yes. But God is a loving Father and His mercy is above all His work, as we read in the Introit of the Mass:

Thou hast mercy upon all, O Lord, and hatest none of the things which Thou hast made, dissembling the sins of men for the sake of repentance, and sparing them; for Thou art the Lord our God. Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me; for my soul trusteth in Thee.

"Dissembling" (*dissimulans*), "making out as though they were not" is a strong word and yet a hopeful word. It needs, indeed, the warning of St. Paul: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid" (Rom. vi, 1). No, not an enticement to sin, but an encouragement to repentance. For we can realize our sins in one of two ways: as Judas did, or as Peter. Judas' realization was without hope—and he hanged himself; Peter's hope drove him, despite his sin, to the feet of Christ. And so though our sins be as scarlet, or as many as the sands of the sea, the prayer of the Tract of the Mass is ever right-fully and hopefully on our lips: "O Lord, remember not our former iniquities; let Thy mercies speedily prevent us—for we have become exceeding poor."